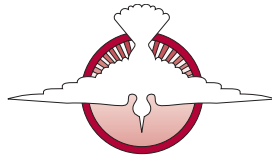


Stories TO Tell



All Saints Lutheran Church A Spirit-filled community where people make a difference

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& Gifts TO Share

**Glorifying God
in all we do**

Fourth-graders and faith

By Ken Keller

Most of them were born the year before I retired. So what common ground can a 70-year-old and a bunch of fourth-graders find in Vacation Bible School?

More than you might guess.

We began by learning that the name Keller means cellar in German, and thereafter, I was called nothing but Mr. Basement. Next, we agreed that, while they have never been my age, I have been theirs, and so, just maybe, I had a few thoughts worth hearing.

We tried to live our Bible lessons in practical terms. Which would explain why Michael wandered about the classroom in a torn shirt, his blonde hair mussed, ringing a bell and calling out "Unclean, unclean," as did the lepers of ancient Israel.



We spoke of trust, and examined what it meant when you paid it more than lip service, lying face-up on the floor with a cup at your ear while a classmate poured water into it from a standing position.

We used lots of towels that week.

But the beautiful and unifying conclusion of our week together seemed to me to be this: Whether you are a 10-year-old just beginning your faith journey, or a

See **FAITH**, other side

Bible Verse

Luke 12:16-21

The Message

"The farm of a certain rich man produced a terrific crop. He talked to himself: 'What can I do? My barn isn't big enough for this harvest.' Then he said, 'Here's what I'll do: I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. Then I'll gather in my grain and goods, and I'll say to myself, Self, you've done well! You've got it made and can now retire. Take it easy and have the time of your life!'

"Just then God showed up and said, 'Fool! Tonight you die. And your barnful of good – who gets it?'

"That's what happens when you fill your barn with Self and not with God."

Telling stories, sharing gifts makes us Christ-like

- God created us, as he did Jesus.
- God loves us, as he did Jesus, and calls us his own.
- God gives us, as he did Jesus, life and faith stories.
- God gifts us, as he did Jesus, with talents.
- God calls us, as he did Jesus, to tell these stories and share these gifts for the sake of the world.
- Jesus gratefully and gracefully told those stories, shared his gifts and gave up his life for our sake.

What is God inviting you to do?

God's people using God's resources for God's purposes



Ken Keller and his class of fourth-graders

Faith

septuagenarian still struggling to understand God's plan for what remains of your life, you both are asking the same questions. And you're both wrestling with what to do with the answers.

These young people have heard the Bible stories. They know the characters and the outcomes. What they don't know is what kind of instruction and guidance those stories are meant to give to their lives. I, too, know the stories, the characters and the outcomes. I, too, wonder if I am drawing the right conclusions from them.

And so we talked. And shared. And questioned. And prayed.

Was anyone's faith made stronger by the experience? I doubt it. Was anyone's faith diminished by the week we spent together? I pray God that it wasn't. But, maybe, the lesson that talking and sharing and questioning and praying are lifelong undertakings was worth a week of their time.

I know it was worth a week of mine.

How we served God through VBS

Through our gifts: We had 110 volunteer teachers, workers, and teen helpers help to make this the best All Saints VBS ever.



Through our presence: We served 375 3-year-olds through sixth-graders who attended classes and learned about the Good News.

Through our money: Our annual budget and registration fees covered the \$9,000 in program costs.

Through our mission gifts: Our children donated \$2,415. This money purchased 120 fans. The Central Ohio Breathing Association will distribute these to regional residents who have lung disorders and no access to air conditioning.

Living gracefully

To live gracefully may not describe our ability to balance on a beam or do the latest dance step. Living gracefully is living fully in the grace of God.

Grace describes God's attitude and action toward us. Grace is undeserved love and favor. Grace is a free, giving heart. Grace describes God's willingness to keep on giving, loving, reaching, forgiving. Grace is how God deals with us.

To live gracefully is to live and respond joyfully to God's grace. It is to live outside of oneself, to be willing to overflow with the grace of God. It is to live openly, to give, to reach out, to share, to care.

To live gracefully is to live with the constant knowledge that God is acting to and for and through us.

Our stewardship theme for this year focuses on "Stories to Tell & Gifts to Share."

One of the gifts is God's grace that fills us and our lives. In response we live, joyfully sharing God's grace and giving thanks for all that God has given—especially the gift of forgiveness and life in Jesus Christ.

With Paul, every day we can say: "By the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Corinthians 15:10).

Thank God for that gift.

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God's people using God's resources for God's purposes